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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that professional selling within the context of a marketing curricula in a business school should be described and practiced in a manner compatible with the marketing concept, which emphasizes satisfaction of consumers' needs. The paper looks at textbook approaches to sales presentations to determine their congruency with the marketing concept and buyer behavior. Analysis of a sample of 11 textbooks on professional selling shows that there are differences with regard to the way need satisfaction is treated across the various textbooks. Two customer need dimensions that are integral to the buying decision process include problem recognition and information needs. A prescription is offered for introducing students to a need-based approach to sales presentations which is compatible with the marketing concept. Students are challenged to view the sales interview as a customer need-centered process. An appendix offers specific findings related to each of the 11 textbooks analyzed. (Contains 30 references.) (JDD)

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Integrating the Concept of Customer Needs Into an Undergraduate Professional Selling Course in a Marketing Curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

Authors of textbooks on personal selling, books written for sales practitioners, and articles in practitioner and academic journals have discussed various sales presentation alternatives. Generally, two typologies of sales presentation alternatives appear, essentially developed around two distinct but related concepts: 1.) approaches to sales presentations, or theories of selling, and 2.) types of sales presentations. Common to many of the typologies is the theory of need-satisfaction (or alternatively, problem-solving theory), where the selling process focuses specifically on customers' needs. Need satisfaction, however, is not clearly presented as the driving theory behind all of the typologies. It is both noteworthy and troubling that the concept of need satisfaction is understated within the typologies of selling, when it appears to be at the core of the marketing concept. Such understatement, in fact, presents a challenge for those who teach selling.

The existence of undergraduate personal selling courses in marketing curricula of business schools infers that the content of a personal selling course is compatible with the content of other courses within the marketing domain. Is there any logic in describing marketing in terms of satisfying customers' needs, and not describing personal selling--a subset of marketing--consistently in the same terms? Marketing academicians will recognize that there is a discrepancy if they compare and contrast some of the personal selling textbooks with principles of marketing, marketing management, industrial marketing and consumer behavior texts.

The challenge for academicians is to persuade students that the selling process is compatible with a marketing philosophy. The challenge is also to influence students to have a favorable attitude toward selling by depicting selling as being marketing-oriented. In the process, the professor must sometimes make a distinction between what is being taught in the classroom, which is a somewhat idealist look at sales, and what is frequently found in actual

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fact that often it is not. The final aspect of the challenge is to develop a selling course on a foundation of customer needs and to build all course elements and topics on that foundation.

The purpose of this document is to first look at textbook approaches to sales presentations to determine their congruency with both the marketing concept and buyer behavior. The analysis will show that there are differences with regard to the way need-satisfaction is treated across the various textbooks. Next, the concept of needs is examined from the perspectives of marketing management and buyer behavior in terms of how the concept of buyers' needs is discussed and integrated into these two topics. This provides the basis for the argument that professional selling must be defined in terms of filling customers' needs. Finally, a prescription is offered for introducing students to a need-based approach to sales presentations which is compatible with the marketing concept. In fact, the sections of this document entitled "A MARKETING MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE," "NEEDS OF BUYERS," and "BUYERS' NEEDS FROM A DECISION MAKING PERSPECTIVE" are used as lecture material for introducing the sales course to students on the first and second day of class.

TEXTBOOK TREATMENTS

A review of a convenience sample of eleven recent textbooks on professional selling reveals several theories which explain how people make purchase decisions, and several types of sales presentations which salespeople can use. As stated in the introduction, the typologies of sales presentation alternatives seem to have been developed around two distinct but related concepts: 1.) approaches to selling, and 2.) types of sales presentations. While there is some commonality among theories and sales presentation types as outlined by the various authors, there are also some significant differences. Often, the idea that selling and the sales process should be based on satisfying customer needs is not immediately evident. The appendix provides a summary of the treatment given these topics by the authors of the eleven contemporary personal selling textbooks.

A MARKETING MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

While definitions of marketing vary, a frequently quoted definition is one offered by the American Marketing Association:

> Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives (American Marketing Association 1985).

In the context of this definition, the concept of need satisfaction is implicit if one agrees that a customer's objective during the exchange process is to fill a need (or solve a problem).

The term "marketing concept" has been used to describe an organization's commitment to serving customer **needs** while achieving the organization's goals. A "marketing orientation" or "market orientation" implies that an organization is trying to implement the marketing concept. Accordingly, a market-oriented company is one which attempts to serve customer **needs** in order to achieve its own organizational goals.

Personal selling, of course, is recognized as being within the domain of marketing. For those who subscribe to the "4 Ps" of marketing model, selling is regarded as an important element in the promotional "P" of the 4 Ps. If it is agreed that marketing is driven by customer needs, and that selling is an integral part of marketing, it follows that personal selling should be described as an activity oriented toward filling customers' needs. Hence, in discussing, teaching, and practicing personal selling, it is consistent with the marketing concept to position all personal selling activity as part of the process of satisfying customer needs.

NEEDS OF BUYERS

The construct of buyers' needs is multi-dimensional. Although up to this point no distinction has been made between individual consumers and organizations, the different dimensions of buyers' needs are associated with both individual consumers and organizational customers. Both the consumer behavior and organizational buying literature deal with buyers' needs along these different

dimensions. Two dimensions are relevant to this document because they are an integral part of the buying decision process. They include:

1. Buyers' Needs (functional and higher-level motives)--These are needs which are associated with the "problem recognition" stage of the buyer's decision process (e.g., Engel, Blackwell and Miniard 1993; Robinson, Faris, and Wind 1967). By definition, these are needs that can be satisfied with the selection and acquisition of an appropriate product (good or service).
2. Information Needed for Decision Making (information needs)--These are needs which buyers have for information to be used in decision making beyond the problem recognition stage. Where hierarchical decision levels are involved, information needs tend to multiply.

In addition, there are at least two other types of customer needs related to personal selling, but not directly associated with the buying decision process models. These include: the need customers have to be communicated with according to their behavioral style (Alessandra, Cathart and Wexler 1988), and the need customers have to be treated with courtesy and respect during the exchange process, and afterward. While the latter might not be explicitly documented in the selling literature, one might argue that during the exchange process customers have a need to have their self-image either supported or enhanced.

BUYERS' NEEDS FROM A DECISION-MAKING PERSPECTIVE

This perspective on buyers' needs is an expansion of items number 1 and 2 above; that is, buyers' needs (functional and higher-level motives) and information needed for decision making (information needs). These needs are discussed from a framework of representative models of the buying process. Both the 5-step consumer decision process model for high-involvement purchases and the multi-step organizational buying models start with problem recognition as the first step, and have subsequent steps which are generally comparable.

Consumer Buying

In consumer buying, high-involvement decision making is frequently described as a five-step process (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard 1993, p. 53; Hawkins, Best and Coney 1992, p.20; Mowen 1993, p. 378; Peter and Olson 1993, p. 225; Schiffman and Kanuk 1991 p. 557; Wilkie 1990, p. 567). John Dewey (1910) has been credited as the original source of the multi-step decision process. It should be recognized, of course, that not all consumer decisions are high-involvement. It might be expected, however, that purchase situations where professional personal selling is involved would usually typify high-involvement decisions.

Problem Recognition

Problem recognition represents the first stage of the consumer decision process. Beginning with the 6th edition of their book, Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1990) began referring to this stage as need recognition. Schiffman and Kanuk (1991) also use the term need recognition to describe the first stage. It is at this stage where the consumer "perceives a need and becomes motivated to solve the 'problem' that he or she has just recognized (Wilkie 1990, p. 569)." Engel, Kollat and Blackwell's original definition of problem recognition, and their subsequent versions have been closely paraphrased and adopted by other writers. Currently, Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1993, p. 508) describe need recognition as "the perception of a difference between the desired state of affairs and the actual situation sufficient to arouse and activate the decision process." It is unclear from the preceding definition exactly what is meant by "ideal state of affairs" and "actual situation." Bruner (1985) is somewhat more specific in defining problem or opportunity recognition in terms of a perception of a significant difference between the "two states for some need." Similarly, Louden and Della Bitta (1988, p. 590) used the concept of "needs" in defining the actual state as "the way in which a need is already being met," and in defining the desired state as, "the way a person would like for the need to be satisfied." While there may be disagreement as to the relationship between needs and motives, there is precedent for using the terms interchangeably (Louden and Della Bitta 1988, p. 368; Wilkie 1990, p. 193).

Information Needs

Up to this point, the notion of an unfilled need has been discussed relative to goods and services (goal objects) which might satisfy the need. In addition to problem recognition, the concept of need applies at other stages in the decision process.

The second, third and fourth steps in the consumer buying model specify that consumers search for information, internally and externally, in order to evaluate alternatives and make an appropriate product choice. This represents information needed for decision making and includes the following: to learn which brands are available, to learn which criteria are salient for brand comparison, to evaluate the relative desirability or importance of each attribute, and to obtain information for forming beliefs about the brand relative to the salient criteria (Mowen 1993, p. 397). Mowen's view is supported by the behavioral intentions model (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975), and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action. Components of Fishbein's theory and model include brands to be considered, evaluative criteria (attributes) on which the brands will be compared, significance of each evaluative criterion, and beliefs linking brands to evaluative criteria. Each component represents an information use requirement; together they correspond to the information uses suggested by Mowen.

Another aspect of information needs is associated with different "hierarchical decision levels" or types of choices made by buyers. In the process of finding a product-solution to fill a recognized need, a buyer potentially faces a series of information needs associated with several hierarchical levels with regard to the product-solution. This issue has been addressed in the literature in terms of levels of product knowledge required by consumers in order to make decisions; levels which range from more abstract to less abstract. Peter and Olson (1993, pp. 87-90) acknowledged four levels of product knowledge at which consumers make decisions. These levels, on a continuum of abstraction, include product class, product form, brand and model/features. Although the most abstract level in Peter and Olson's (1993) scheme is product class, consumers may form an even more abstract level by subsuming

several product classes into one category which has been denoted as a "generic market" (McCarthy and Perreault 1993, p. 84).

Organizational Buying

A popular descriptive model of the organizational buying process is the BUYGRID model (Robinson, Faris and Wind 1967). It is similar to the 5-step consumer buying model, although it contains 8 "buyphases" (steps). In addition, the BUYGRID model has a second dimension, "buyclasses", which includes three distinct buying situations: new task, modified rebuy, and straight rebuy. Information requirements are highest in a new task situation. In terms of the buyphases, the BUYGRID model too denotes anticipation or recognition of a problem (need) as the first step in the process.

Problem Recognition

Problem recognition in the organizational buying process is associated with the attainment of an organization's objectives. Both business and non-profit organizations purchase goods and services in order to either directly or indirectly help them achieve their organizational objectives. For-profit organizations' generic objectives typically relate to sales volume, profit, and/or market share. Non-profit organizations have a somewhat different set of objectives usually associated with fund raising; providing services, experiences, or possibly goods to their target market; or promoting ideas to their target market or audience.

Consequently, any type of organization will be motivated to make a purchase only if the purchase fills a need which is somehow linked with the attainment of their objectives. The procurement process is triggered when the organization recognizes a need or a problem that can be filled or satisfied with the purchase of a good or service.

Information Needs

While the second and third steps in the organizational buying process are distinct, they are closely related and may, in some instances, be combined. The second step, "Determination of characteristics and quantity of needed item" and the third step, "Description of characteristics and

quantity of needed item" require that criteria be established for evaluating alternative product solutions. Accordingly, organizational buyers need information concerning which evaluative criteria are salient, and the relative importance of the criteria.

The fourth step involves finding potential sources of supply (product alternatives) and requires information as to which alternatives exist. After proposals are acquired and analyzed (the fifth step), the next step is the evaluation of proposals and selection of a supplier(s). This latter step requires information about each alternative so that the alternatives can be measured against the evaluative criteria, and a final choice made. Thus in the BUYGRID model, steps two through six are associated with information needs.

A general model of organizational decision processes, similar to the BUYGRID model has been proposed by Webster and Wind (1972). It is a five-stage model, beginning with "identification of need." The second stage of this model is denoted as "establishing objectives and specifications." The third and fourth stages are associated with identifying and evaluating alternatives. The final stage is selecting the supplier. This model also relates to buyers' needs associated with problem recognition and the information needs with regard to finding, evaluating and choosing alternatives.

Although hierarchical decision levels are not specifically acknowledged in the aforementioned decision process models, they are potentially a part of the decision process. Just as with consumer product decisions, several decision levels are possible with industrial products. As a generic example which might be applied to industrial products, Kotler (1994, p. 434) suggests: need family, product family, product class, product line, product type, brand, and item as possible levels of choice faced by buyers. And, just as with the consumer decision process, hierarchical decisions in organizational buying situations require information for decision making at the various levels.

INTRODUCING A NEED-BASED SALES INTERVIEW STRATEGY

This section outlines an approach for introducing students to the need-based concept of selling during the first and second class meetings of a professional selling course. The first two meetings are

important since the impressions made on the students will be lasting. It is the time to begin addressing the previously mentioned challenges: to persuade students that the selling process is compatible with a marketing philosophy, to influence students to have a favorable attitude toward selling, and to establish that need-based selling should be the norm.

The approach begins with the professor clearly positioning selling as a key component in the marketing process, and as an activity completely compatible with a marketing philosophy. Literally, the professor discusses the points contained in the earlier sections of this document: "A MARKETING MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE," "NEEDS OF BUYERS," and "BUYERS' NEEDS FROM A DECISION MAKING PERSPECTIVE." The three topics together provide an introduction to the selling process which explicitly establishes that professional selling should be nothing less than a customer-oriented, need-based activity.

Next, the selling process is outlined using a framework encompassing the terms "sales interview" and "sales presentation." This sales process framework, shown in Exhibit 1, is reviewed briefly with the students to introduce them to material to be covered during the remainder of the first class meeting, as well as to give them a look at what will be covered in subsequent class meetings.

Exhibit 1 The Selling Process

I. Prospecting

II. Pre-Call Preparation and Information Gathering

III. Sales Interview

- A. Approach
- B. Need Recognition (including determining the dimensions of the need and stimulating a desire to fill the need)
- C. Sales Presentation
  1. Presenting the benefits and features of the product in terms of how it fills the previously uncovered need.
  2. Handling Buyer Resistance (Overcoming Objections)
  3. Obtaining Commitment (Closing)

IV. Post-Sale Activities

Students are told that the sales interview stage is the focus of the remainder of the first class meeting, and buyers' needs will be discussed from two previously discussed viewpoints: problem recognition and information needed for decision making. They are challenged to view the sales interview as simply a customer need-centered process, and to recognize that all sales interviews must then be variations on this need-based theme. Sales interviews which do not fit the need-based model would be inappropriate for any salesperson with a marketing- orientation philosophy. Students are told that the "approach" step will be discussed later in the course, and that it is problem recognition and information needs which are relevant to the immediate discussion of customer needs. With regard to the framework, one should note that although overcoming buyer resistance and obtaining commitment are shown as components of the "sales presentation," they are also relevant at other stages in the process.

Problem (Need) Recognition

Given that purchase behavior is triggered by problem recognition; that is, an unfilled need, a need-based sales interview strategy can be described partially in terms of how problem recognition is achieved. In the salesperson-prospect dyad, there are several alternatives regarding the need recognition stage of the decision process depending on who requests the first meeting, and the knowledge each party has of the potential problem. Exhibit 2 shows those possibilities from the salesperson's perspective, together with alternative subsequent steps for the salesperson.

Exhibit 2 Need Recognition Possibilities

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1. PROSPECT RECOGNIZES NEED--Prospect either recognizes a need (problem) and approaches the salesperson to communicate that need to the salesperson, or the salesperson happens to contact a prospect who has already recognized a need. At the end of end of this step, both parties will have recognized that a need exists; that is, the need has been validated. Then the salesperson is faced with two alternatives:

   A. The salesperson can proceed to uncover implications and stimulate the desire to fill the need before making the sales presentation.

   B. The salesperson can proceed to make a sales presentation without uncovering implications, nor stimulating the desire to fill the need.

2. PROSPECT DOESN'T RECOGNIZE NEED--Salesperson approaches a suspect assuming that the suspect has a need. The salesperson is then at the prospecting stage of the selling process where he or she is still trying to qualify the suspect if the prospect has not been prequalified (need, authority to buy, adequate financial resources, etc.). The salesperson is faced with two alternatives:

   A. Salesperson can attempt to validate the need, uncover implications, and stimulate the desire to fill the need, and then make a sales presentation (present the offering or solution).

   B. Salesperson can proceed to make a sales presentation without validating the need, uncovering implications, nor stimulating the desire to fill the need.

For the selling process to provide utility, in terms of need satisfaction, both the prospect and the salesperson must recognize that a need does exist. Following agreement with regard to problem recognition, the prospect must have a desire to solve the problem before the salesperson can expect the prospect to effectively process the information in the sales presentation. Although it is premature

to discuss these ramifications during the introductory class meeting, students are told that one way a salesperson can accomplish this step is to use an approach suggested by Rackham (1988) where the salesperson uses implication and need-payoff questions. This approach is imbedded in Rackham's "SPIN" sales strategy. It is a strategy which recognizes several hierarchical states with reference to the concept of need. Generically speaking, the states include: recognition of the need, implications (the consequences of not filling the need), desire to fill the need, and choice of a need-filling solution. The buyer must deal with each of these states, although in a specific situation one or more steps might be omitted or may not be confronted during the process in the hierarchical order suggested.

Information Needs

In addition to the several variations on problem recognition, there are multiple variations in terms of what a prospect already knows regarding appropriate evaluative criteria to use and the relative desirability of those criteria, the availability of alternatives, and information about the alternatives relative to the evaluative criteria. To illustrate these needs, students are asked to think about the decision process for purchasing a piece of electronic home-entertainment equipment. A compact disc player is used as the example, and the students are asked what they would need to know to make a satisfactory purchase. In a matter of several minutes, with probing by the professor, the students will have suggested the components of a multiattribute decision making model including brands available and stores where the brands can be found, product attributes or benefits sought and their importance, and information about the brands so they can be compared with regard to the attributes or benefits sought. It should be noted that the decision making calculations associated with applying the multiattribute model are not undertaken at this time. Only the components of the model are introduced.

At this point it becomes clear to most students that there is an information role for the salesperson to play in the prospect's decision process. For example, a prospect may recognize a need and view it as significant enough to do something about, however, the prospect may not know which criteria (salient attributes) to use to evaluate the alternative brands. The salesperson can help by

questioning and providing information as to which criteria would be appropriate and most important (salient). On the other hand, a prospect may recognize a need, view it as significant enough to do something about, and may also have a clearly defined set of evaluative criteria to employ in the alternative evaluation process. This same prospect, however, may or may not know the alternatives which are available. Or, if the prospect knows which alternatives exist, he or she may need information on which to compare the alternatives relative to how well they stack up against the evaluative criteria. In these instances again, the salesperson's role as an information provider is obvious.

A final aspect of information needs, as discussed earlier in this document, is associated with "hierarchical decision levels" or types of choices made by buyers. In the process of finding a product-solution to fill a recognized need, a buyer may face information needs associated with several hierarchical levels, ranging from more abstract to less abstract. In this regard, students are challenged to rethink the compact disc player decision. It's possible that a consumer might have to make several decisions before deciding to purchase a compact disc player or a particular brand/model of compact disc player. For example, he or she might have discretionary funds to spend on home entertainment, and at that level of decision making have a choice as to whether to spend the money on a new TV set, camcorder, music system, or related product. If the consumer decides on the music system product class, he or she will have to choose from one or more product lines such as FM tuners, compact disc players, and tape players of various types. Students will recognize that most consumers probably do not make decisions at these levels at the time of purchase, but to the extent they do, a salesperson can be in a position to provide information needed for decision making regarding criteria and alternatives at the various levels.

Closing Remarks

The second class meeting is concluded with several remarks intended to underscore the connection between professional selling and customer needs. Students are told that being a professional salesperson in a marketing-oriented organization requires a commitment to serving

customer needs while achieving the goals of the organization. The manner in which a salesperson determines a customer's needs and presents his or her product solution is a sales strategy which is subject to some variation. Students are asked to think of individual sales strategies as simply a function of the complexity of the decision in terms of customer needs and the complexity of the product itself.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This document has looked at customer needs from two aspects, problem recognition and information needs, which are well-grounded in the marketing literature. It has prescribed an introduction to the subject of professional selling which can be easily adopted and implemented by those responsible for teaching the course. It is simply a matter of using the appropriate elements of this document as introductory material in order to set the stage for the entire course. It should be of concern to marketing academicians that professional selling be described and practiced in a manner compatible with the marketing concept. Starting a student off with an orientation toward filling customer needs is a step in the right direction. The first class meeting is the time to begin meeting the other challenges of influencing attitudes toward selling and establishing that need-based selling should be the norm in spite of the fact that it is not always a reality.

APPENDIX

Analysis of Recent Selling Textbooks

Anderson (1991)

Discusses adaptive versus canned sales presentation.

Presents seven sales presentation strategies:

1. Stimulus-Response
2. Formula (AIDA is the most commonly used formula)
3. Need Satisfaction (first discover prospect's needs or wants)
4. Depth Selling
5. Selling to a Buyer Group
6. Team Selling
7. Consultative Problem Solving

Notes that in the "marketing era" business shifted it orientation from production and selling to identifying and solving customer problems; and "consultative selling" is a practical application of selling to this new orientation.

Recommends "consultative problem solving" because it is nonmanipulative and it focuses on the prospect's problems not the seller's products. Does not make a clear distinction between "consultative problem solving" and "need satisfaction."

Buskirk and Buskirk (1992)

States that all sales presentations should be planned and that only the extent and rigidity of the plans are in question.

Appears to use the terms "standardized," "memorized," and "canned" interchangeably to represent inflexible presentations. Flexibility, on the other hand, is represented by the concept of "situational selling."
Recommends "situational selling" because of the element of timing, personality differences, rapport with the customer, and the particular circumstances of the customer. Does not specifically deal with customer needs in describing types of sales presentations.

Clabaugh & Forbes (1992)

Offers a continuum of selling styles based on the orientation of salespeople:

1. "Others" (Customer) Orientation/Non-Manipulative Selling Styles:
   - A. Relationship Selling--A consultative approach which evolved as a response to buyers needing more information fore purchase decisions. Emphasis is on solving the prospect's needs in the best possible way.
   - B. Problem Solving--Emphasis is on solving the problem with the salesperson's product rather than just satisfying the prospect's needs in the best possible way.
2. "Self-Orientation"/Manipulative Selling Styles
   - A. Persuasion--Customers are convinced to purchase by the salesperson's persuasive efforts. Salespeople may move toward problem-solving as

suggested by the marketing concept, but they still use their own gain as the reason for making a sale.

B. Hard Sell--Salesperson uses the customer to meet the salesperson's own ends.

Discusses approaches to selling based on orientation of salesperson:

1. Salesperson-Oriented Approaches:
   A. Canned Presentation
   B. Formula Presentation--Based on a mental states theory such as AIDCA
2. Customer-Oriented Approaches:
   A. Need-Satisfaction--Emphasizes the customer's needs, not the products being offered
   B. Barrier Selling--Barriers are described as the five buying decision areas: need, source, product, price and time. If the salesperson overcomes the barriers the customer places in the way, the sale is made. Barrier selling is a customized approach since its content varies according to the customer's needs.
   C. Relationship Selling--Provides insight into customers' problems and totally integrates a salesperson's knowledge in solving the customers' problems.

Relationship selling is a helping, non-manipulative, consultative role where the salesperson's motive is to add value to the customer's decision process by providing information about products and services available in the marketplace to best satisfy the customer's needs and wants. A long-term relationship is built on a trusting, nonmanipulative two-way interaction between the customer and salesperson. Only recently have large numbers of companies recognized the need for and the advantages of a relationship approach to selling. Because of the abundance of products and services, customers are seeking more and better information, resulting in a trend toward relationship selling.

Coppett & Staples (1994)

Offers two views of sales presentations:

1. Sales presentations are something a salesperson creates and delivers to customers.
2. Sales presentations are something the salesperson and the customer create together.

Discusses five basic types of presentations:

1. Stimulus-Response--An example is the memorized presentation
2. Formula-Based--An example is the AIDAS (attention, interest, desire, action, satisfaction) Model
3. Chain of Logic--Assumes that agreement to purchase the offered good or service is a logical solution to the customer's problem and that the customer will recognize that it is, in fact, the logical answer.
4. Need-Satisfaction--Oriented toward discovering and meeting a customer's needs.
5. Problem-Solution--Similar to "need-satisfaction," but based on more formal studies of the customer's operations.

Where consumers and organization buyers are better educated and more demanding, the need-satisfaction and problem-solution presentations would seem to be favored.

Suggests that relationship management as an approach to sales can contribute to the successful execution of a firm's strategy. Relationship management is represented as the antithesis of transaction-oriented sales principles. Characteristics of relationship management is that it involves the salesperson as well as all levels of a firm's management, that encounters between the salesperson and the customer are planned, and that successful relationships are durable.

Futrell (1993)

Presents four sales presentation methods based on the percentage of the conversation which is controlled by the salesperson:

1. Memorized
2. Formula (Persuasive Selling based on AIDA procedure)--Salesperson must correctly assume customer's needs and wants.
3. Need-Satisfaction--Incorporates three "need" phases: need development, need awareness and need satisfaction.
4. Problem-Solution--Development of a detailed analysis of customer's needs.

The real difference between "need-satisfaction" and "problem-solution" appears to be that in the latter, the salesperson is required to make several calls in order to develop the detailed analysis of the customer's needs.

Hafer (1993)

Describes four types of sales presentations:

1. Scripted (canned)--Characterized by the stimulus-response interaction. Assumes that there are people with similar interests or needs and they are either ready to buy or interested in buying.
2. Formula--Salesperson subtly proceeds through the presentation in a predetermined series of steps. Allows for more interaction than scripted presentations. Examples are the AIDA formula and SQR^3. The latter formula says to "stimulate" first, allow the prospect to "question" and the salesperson to "Respond" next, followed by the customer's "reaction" to the response, and finally "reinforce."
3. Need-Satisfaction--Highly interactive and customized focusing on three "need" phases: need development, need awareness and need fulfillment.
4. Consultative--Salesperson acts as a consultant to the prospect for the purpose of solving a complex problem by offering a variety of alternatives or solutions.

Advises that each presentation style has a particular situation for which it is best adapted. The styles are all tools of the adaptive salesperson. It is simply a matter of using the right tool for the right job to achieve the best results.

Hair, Notturno and Russ (1991)

Presents three general types of sales presentations:

1. Memorized/Canned--Based on the stimulus-response theory
2. Story Plan--Based on the need-satisfaction theory. It is an outline of selling points organized to make a favorable impression for the product. Salesperson must identify and memorize specific areas of the prospect's needs including buying motives, product advantages, product appeal and objections.

3. Program--Based on the problem-solution theory. Also known as the "survey," It is a written presentation developed from a detailed survey and analysis of the prospect's problem.

Discusses advantages and disadvantages of each type of sales presentation, but makes no specific recommendations.

Manning and Reece (1990)

Discusses three buying process theories:

1. Buyer Action Theory: AIDCA (Same as AIDA, but includes a "Conviction" step)
2. Buyer Resolution Theory (Based on 5 decisions which must be made by the buyer: Why, what, where, when should I buy?; and What is a fair price?)
3. Need-Satisfaction Theory (Based on the assumption that buying decisions are made to satisfy need; the foundation of consultative-type selling)

Presents two sales presentation strategies:

1. Planned (Consultative)
2. Canned

Recommends consultative-style selling as an extension of the marketing concept. The role of the salesperson is first to diagnose customers' needs, and second to make well-considered, well-presented recommendations to satisfy those needs.

Marks (1991)

Presents a theory of interactive selling based the psychological principle that once people recognize the existence of certain needs, they begin to act to satisfy those needs. Accordingly, it is up to the salesperson to determine buyer needs, help buyers recognize those needs, and clarify needs so they mutually agree on them. Then it is up to the salesperson to shows how the product satisfies this need or problem.

Slodow & Thomas (1991)

Provides an overview of buyer behavior based on the AIDA Model. Equates "attention" with perception, "interest" with motivation, "desire" with attitudes, and "action" with problem solving. To establish the buying situation as one involving "problem solving," the salesperson has to carefully question the prospect so the prospect can clearly visualize the problem. Then the salesperson has only to convince the prospect that his or her particular product will solve the problem. Attempts to describe subtle differences between "needs" and "problems."

Discusses five presentation formats:

1. Fully Automated--A "canned" or predetermined presentation is delivered via audio-visual technology.
2. Semi-Automated--A "canned" or predetermined presentation consists mainly of visual aids along with written material. The salesperson reads the canned message from printed material and answers questions which may arise.
3. Memorized
4. Organized--Much of the content is organized in advance, while the actual dialogue flows naturally.

5. Unstructured--Salesperson is free to present the product in any way that he or she chooses. This format, however, is not unplanned.

Suggests that the content of a sales presentation should always address the prospect's problems. Though less structured formats are more easily adapted to solve individual prospects's problems, it may be possible to use a preplanned presentation when a problem is common to many prospects.

Weitz, Castleberry and Tanner (1992)

Presents three basic sales presentation methods:

1. Standard Memorized
2. Outlined (Systematically arrangement of major points; some portions may be memorized)
3. Customized (Includes 4 basic steps: getting permission to make an analysis or survey; making the survey, which includes gathering and analyzing the facts; preparing the program or proposal; and presenting the program or proposal to the buyer).

Recommends the customized method inasmuch as it forces the salesperson to practice the marketing concept by focusing on satisfying customers' needs.

Distinguishes between need satisfaction philosophy and consultative selling philosophy. The difference between the two is that under the consultative selling philosophy the salesperson might well recommend a competitor's product over the salesperson's own. The customized presentation serves both of these philosophies.

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